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1 – Clean Up Operations At Deer Park Facility Keep Focus On Tank Farm, Houston Public Media, 4/1/19

<https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/2019/04/01/327325/clean-up-operations-at-deer-park-facility-keep-focus-on-tank-farm/>

The clean-up process continues at the Deer Park petrochemical storage facility that caught fire on March 17. Intercontinental Terminals Company (ITC), the company that owns the facility, says response crews are still working on removing product from the tank farm. The incident has restricted traffic on a section of the Houston Ship Channel and the U.S. Coast Guard doesn't know at this point when the restrictions will be lifted.

2 – Citizens take to streets in protest of Formosa plant, Louisiana Weekly, 4/1/19

<http://www.louisianaweekly.com/citizens-take-to-streets-in-protest-of-formosa-plant/>

More than a dozen advocacy groups have formed a new coalition to fight industrial development and pollution along the Mississippi River in south Louisiana. Called Citizens Against Death Alley, the new group includes environmental organizations like the Louisiana Bucket Brigade and 350 New Orleans as well as concerned residents from parishes including St. James and St. John the Baptist.

3 – NOPB and Port NOLA secure EPA Grant for Eco-Locomotive, American Journal of Transportation, 4/1/19

<https://www.ajot.com/news/nopb-and-port-nola-secure-epa-grant-for-eco-locomotive>

The Port of New Orleans and project partner, the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad (NOPB), were awarded a National Clean Diesel Funding grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA grant will provide 40% of total project cost, allowing NOPB to retrofit the engine of a conventional diesel locomotive to a cleaner engine with low emissions beyond current requirements.

4 – New Mexico Environment Department gets \$350,000 EPA grant, Irrigation & Green Industry, 4/1/19

[https://igin.com/article-7271-New-Mexico-Environment-Department-gets-\\$350000-EPA-grant.html](https://igin.com/article-7271-New-Mexico-Environment-Department-gets-$350000-EPA-grant.html)

It wasn't extraterrestrials that created the mess, just old dry cleaning businesses. The toxic chemicals they left behind long after closing up shop caused a big swath of Roswell, New Mexico to be declared a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Superfund site.

5 – State pledges \$80M for Bayou Chene floodgate that will relieve backwater flooding in 6 parishes, Baton Rouge Advocate, 3/31/19

https://www.theadvocate.com/acadiana/news/article_295195be-53fc-11e9-b564-530f1b85d57d.html

Residents in six southeastern Louisiana parishes will get some relief from backwater flooding thanks to a new floodgate. Gov. John Bel Edwards announced this week that the state's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is pledging \$80 million to build a permanent floodgate across Bayou Chene.

6 – Federal judge dismisses suit seeking class-action status against St. John chemical plant, Baton Rouge Advocate, 3/31/19

https://www.theadvocate.com/new_orleans/news/courts/article_0ff955ee-5045-11e9-ba0b-57581a270bc4.html

A federal judge in New Orleans has dismissed a lawsuit seeking class-action status against the Denka Performance Elastomer plant near LaPlace — making it the first lawsuit against the plant to be thrown out since residents started suing over "excessive" chloroprene levels two years ago.

7 – State pledges \$80M for Bayou Chene floodgate that will relieve backwater flooding in 6 parishes, Baton Rouge Advocate, 4/1/19

https://www.theadvocate.com/acadiana/news/article_295195be-53fc-11e9-b564-530f1b85d57d.html

Residents in six southeastern Louisiana parishes will get some relief from backwater flooding thanks to a new floodgate. Gov. John Bel Edwards announced this week that the state's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is pledging \$80 million to build a permanent floodgate across Bayou Chene.

8 – Disputed oil, gas lease sale brings in \$15M, E&E News, 4/1/19

<https://www.eenews.net/energywire/2019/04/02/stories/1060139077>

In a remote stretch of New Mexico desert, the U.S. government put in motion an experiment aimed at proving to the world that radioactive waste could be safely disposed of deep underground, rendering it less of a threat to the environment.

9 – OPINION: Every level of government failed southern Dallas by allowing Shingle Mountain to grow, Dallas Morning News, 4/2/19

<https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/commentary/2019/04/02/city-dallas-state-share-blame-shingle-mountain>

When I learned the city of Dallas had pulled the certificate of occupancy for Blue Star Recycling's asphalt shingle operation along South Central Expressway, otherwise known as Shingle Mountain, I cried. I cried out of relief that something serious was finally being done about a company that's made life miserable for families on our small southern Dallas street for over a year.

10 – OPINION: Educating and preparing communities for long-term disaster recovery, Texas Tribune, 4/2/19

https://www.tribtalk.org/2019/04/02/educating-and-preparing-communities-for-long-term-disaster-recovery/?_ga=2.124282954.1587057970.1554217449-1518530642.1472567047

Disaster preparedness and recovery would probably not come to mind if you were asked what the Texas General Land Office (GLO), Texas Education Agency, Texas Department of Insurance and the Texas Department of State Health Services have in common.

11 – Wheeler speaks regularly with Trump's top energy adviser, E&E News, 4/2/19

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2019/04/01/stories/1060138797>

EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler is regularly in contact with the White House's senior energy adviser, according to newly released scheduling calendars.

12 – EPA's own adviser finds Trump's rollback of car rules could cost jobs, Washington Post, 4/2/19

<https://wapo.st/2OEK0Cw>

An environmental adviser to the Trump administration projects that its attempt to reverse Obama-era fuel-efficiency standards could have a steep long-term toll on the U.S. economy and eventually cost the country hundreds of thousands of jobs.

13 – Shell to leave oil lobby group over climate policy concerns, San Antonio Express-News, 4/1/19

<https://www.mysanantonio.com/business/energy/article/Shell-to-Leave-Oil-Lobby-Group-Over-Climate-13734528.php>

Royal Dutch Shell Plc's position on climate change is misaligned with about half of the trade associations it's a part of, and the disagreement with one is so severe the company will let its membership lapse next year.

14 – California jury orders Chevron to pay \$21M for cancer claims, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 4/1/19

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2019/apr/01/california-jury-orders-chevron-pay-21m-cancer-clai/?news-arkansas>

A Northern California jury ordered Chevron Corp. to pay the families of two brothers who died of cancer a combined \$21.4 million after concluding the company failed to properly warn the men about the dangers of a toxic solvent they worked with at a company-owned tire factory.

NEWS

Clean Up Operations At Deer Park Facility Keep Focus On Tar Farm

There's no timeline for when the clean-up will be completed, or when the Houston Ship Channel will fully reopen.

ALVARO 'AL' ORTIZ | APRIL 1, 2019, 2:00 PM



Intercontinental Terminals Company

The clean-up process continues on the Houston Ship Channel as part of the recovery efforts from the March 17 massive fire that occurred at ITC's petrochemical facility in Deer Park, TX.

The clean-up process continues at the Deer Park petrochemical storage facility that [caught fire on March 17](#). Intercontinental Terminals (ITC), the company that owns the facility, says response crews are still working on removing product from the tank farm. The incident has restricted traffic on a section of the Houston Ship Channel and the U.S. Coast Guard doesn't know at this point when the restrictions will lift.

ITC Executive Brent Weber said at a news conference held on Monday morning that the tank farm is secured. "The level on the tank farm is basically dry now with a very light layer of foam," he said.

"We have crews that are going to enter the tank farm area today," Weber added, "to begin a little further remediation on the residual product in the tank farm." The tanks that are still being cleaned up contain naphtha, which is highly flammable, and gasoline blend stock.

Weber also said that the dike containment wall that sustained a partial breach during the aftermath of the fire has been patched with temporary repairs.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has launched a [new section of its website](#) with information, including sampling location and photos, about the incident.

Multiple agencies, including the TCEQ, along with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Harris County and ITC, continue monitoring air quality. Harris County is also [posting updated information online](#) about air quality.

EPA Spokesman Adam Adams said there was an elevated benzene reading over the weekend but it just lasted a short period of time.

Responders found one deceased dolphin and another one that was stranded also during the weekend. Adams said members of the Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network examined them and determined that it didn't appear the dolphins were impacted by the incident.

The organization is "monitoring a dolphin pod that's well south of Morgan's Point," according to Adams. He added ten birds have been released and responders hadn't found any new fish or wildlife impacted as of Monday morning.

There are still pockets of oil on sections of the Houston Ship Channel, with heavier concentrations on Tucker's Bayou.

U.S. Coast Guard Captain Rich Howes says there isn't a "firm timeline" on full reopening of the ship channel. The section of the channel with restricted traffic goes from Tucker Bayou to Light 116, and only operates during daylight hours.

ITC has received approximately 3,000 inquiries about claims and 800 claims related to the fire and chemical spill.

The company has posted [a video](#) on YouTube that shows recovery efforts along the Houston Ship Channel.

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Alvaro 'Al' Ortiz

GENERAL ASSIGNMENT REPORTER



Alvaro 'Al' Ortiz is originally from Spain. He worked for several years in his home country and gained experience in all platforms of journalism, from wire services to print, as well as broadcast news and digital reporting. In 2001, Al came to the United States to pursue a Master's degree...

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Citizens take to streets in protest of Formosa plant

1st April 2019 · 0 Comments

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By Meghan Holmes

Contributing Writer

More than a dozen advocacy groups have formed a new coalition to fight industrial development and pollution along the Mississippi River in south Louisiana.

Called Citizens Against Death Alley, the new group includes environmental organizations like the Louisiana Bucket Brigade and 350 New Orleans as well as concerned residents from parishes including St. James and St. John the Baptist. Beginning April 3, the groups will march together from Reserve to Baton Rouge over the course of five days, highlighting plants with a history of toxic air emissions along the way and culminating at the steps of the governor's mansion.

"We are marching to raise awareness of the environmental issues here, because we have some real problems," said Robert Taylor, who founded Concerned Citizens of St. John the Baptist Parish. "We are also calling on all of our government officials, including the governor, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, and the Louisiana Department of Health, to act. The EPA told us we have the highest rates of cancer in the nation and no one is doing anything. They want to bring more plants to these parishes."

Taylor lives in Reserve, a small African-American community in St. John the Baptist Parish. The area is also home to the Denka Performance Elastomer plant, formerly DuPont, which manufactures neoprene. For the past 50 years, the plant has been emitting a chemical called chloroprene as part of that production process. In 2010, the EPA tightened regulations on chloroprene after finding that certain exposure levels could cause liver and lung cancers.

Around the same time, the EPA was also studying potentially harmful air emissions in south Louisiana. They released their findings in 2015, stating that residents of St. John Parish were more likely than anyone in the nation to develop cancer from air emissions. The organization traced part of that risk to the Denka plant, and insisted the company lower chloroprene emissions. A retrofitting plan reduced releases by 85 percent, but the amount remains above levels that the EPA deems safe.

"I started this organization in the fall of 2016 after the EPA told us what this plant was doing to us," Taylor said. "There is an elementary school with 400 children about 1,500 feet from that plant. They came and put in air monitors and told us those children were being exposed to chloroprene at levels hundreds of times what had been deemed safe. We went to the school board and they did nothing. Those children are still there. Almost all of them are Black, and it was the Black people of Louisiana who elected Jon Bel Edwards. I want to know why the governor has not given us an audience after begging to speak with him for three years. We are suffering, and it seems like no one in the government cares."

In nearby St. James Parish, residents of majority African-American communities in the 5th District express similar frustrations.

"The people in the government that vote for these plants don't live here and breathe what we breathe," said Sharon Lavigne, executive director of RISE St. James. "They act like there aren't people here, or churches, or schools."

Several new plants are slated to be built in St. James, including a multi-billion dollar Formosa facility that will employ 1,200 workers in plastics production and bring the parish billions of dollars in tax revenue (after a decade-long tax exemption expires). The state government, and many local officials, praised Formosa's decision to locate in St. James.

"The parish government had a big party celebrating Formosa and all the billions they were going to get," Lavigne said. "They don't want us to fight, but we are going to keep fighting."

St. James residents also fear a disaster at the nearby Mosaic fertilizer plant, where toxic waste water threatens to spill from a containment area. Louisiana's Department of Environmental Quality has been working with the company to prevent any leaks or spills.

"We have all these emissions and spills and so many plants up and down the river, and more are on the drawing board," Taylor said. "The people are already suffering and they want to build more. To me, that says we are expendable. I want someone to explain to me why we can go to Syria to protect children from gas while our own Black children are being gassed and no one cares."

Taylor and Lavigne will tell their stories next week during the march to Baton Rouge, hoping to stop further industrial development in their communities. They also hope to meet with Jon Bel Edwards and pressure the governor to do more for the African-American communities who propelled him into office.

"This is an election year, so we hope that he listens," says Anne Rolfes, executive director of the Louisiana Bucket Brigade. "He says he cares about the African-American community, so why is he leading their destruction?"

The Coalition Against Death Alley's march begins with a church rally in Reserve on April 3 at Tchoupitoulas Chapel where singers, musicians, poets, church leaders and community members will speak about their experiences in what Taylor describes as "one of the deadliest places to live in the United States." Marchers will walk down River Road, crossing back and forth from east to west bank to highlight different polluters before making their way to Baton Rouge.

“The pollution in these parishes has been bad for a while, but we have reached the point where the situation is incredibly urgent,” Rolfes said. “Construction is planned for six facilities in St. James alone. So, as organizations, I think we all felt the need to come together and act, because people’s lives are on the line.”

This article originally published in the April 1, 2019 print edition of The Louisiana Weekly newspaper.

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NOPB and Port NOLA secure EPA Grant for Eco-Locomotive

By: AJOT | Apr 02 2019 at 07:57 AM | [Ports & Terminals](#)

Cleaner engine will help reduce emissions and fuel consumption

NEW ORLEANS — The Port of New Orleans and project partner, the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad (NOPB), were awarded a National Clean Diesel Funding grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA grant will provide 40% of total project cost, allowing NOPB to retrofit the engine of a conventional diesel locomotive to a cleaner engine with low emissions beyond current requirements. This will be the first locomotive of its kind in the New Orleans gateway.



A National Clean Diesel Funding grant will allow Port of New Orleans and New Orleans Public Belt Railroad to retrofit the engine of a conventional diesel locomotive to a cleaner engine with low emissions beyond current requirements.

This eco-locomotive will meet ultra-low emitting standards (Tier 4) and result in immediate air quality benefits such as reducing ozone precursors, diesel particulate matter, as well as fuel consumption and corresponding greenhouse gas emissions. It will boast a sleek new paint scheme with green accents. The retrofit of the locomotive will begin in Spring 2019, and once completed, will be officially dedicated for use on the NOPB system.

"EPA's clean diesel grants fund cleaner, more efficient transportation to help protect the environment and keep our economy growing," said EPA Regional Administrator Anne Idsal. "Port NOLA and NOPB's efforts to upgrade its locomotive fleet will contribute to improved air quality and benefit the New Orleans community."

The successful grant application was executed in partnership with the Port of New Orleans (Port NOLA). NOPB transitioned from the City of New Orleans to Port NOLA leadership February 1, 2018.

"With Port NOLA and NOPB now fully aligned, we are able to make strategic investments that provide air quality benefits for the community while providing superior service to our users and Class I partners," noted Brandy D. Christian, CEO of NOPB and President and CEO of Port NOLA. "Port NOLA's commitment to sustainability drove the decision to apply for this EPA grant and we look forward to seeing the eco-locomotive on our system."

NOPB and Port NOLA have each piloted other innovative emissions reduction initiatives, including the Port of New Orleans Clean Truck Replacement Incentive Program (Clean TRIP) and NOPB's locomotive idle reduction plan, as a part of their respective strategic plans. Now partners, they are working together to foster programs that address both the maritime and rail space.

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The application for funding was supported by an extensive list of community groups, city officials, as well as member of the Louisiana Congressional delegation, including: Senator Bill Cassidy, Senator John Kennedy, Representative Cedric Richmond, and Representative Steve Scalise.



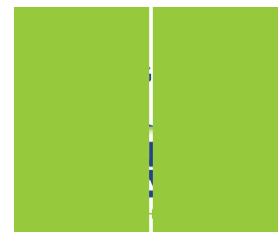
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U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D.: “The Port of New Orleans is proving we can find solutions that utilize American energy to support Louisiana jobs while lowering emissions,” said Dr. Cassidy. “This grant empowers these local solutions to global environmental needs.”

U.S. Senator John Kennedy: “This project invests in one of Louisiana’s greatest public resources. The Port of New Orleans is an economic engine that makes it possible for Louisiana to partner with countries around the world on trade. Investing in the port is always a wise move that supports jobs and Louisiana families.”

U.S. Representative Cedric Richmond: “It is my pleasure to congratulate the New Orleans Public Belt and the Port of New Orleans for recently securing the EPA grant in an effort to foster a more environmentally conscious New Orleans,” said Rep. Richmond. “The Port of New Orleans is one of the leading ports in America and reducing our carbon footprint is paramount to helping our families and communities live longer, healthier lives. I look forward to more improvements to air quality safety from our critical infrastructure.”

Tommy Clark, Commissioner, Office of Multimodal Commerce, LADOTD: “Louisiana’s Office of Multimodal Commerce congratulates our multimodal partners, the NOPB and the Port, on receiving this important grant. An ultra-efficient low-emission locomotive is a clear demonstration of conscientious forethought and dedicated stewardship toward our fragile environment.”

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New Mexico Environment Department gets \$350,000 EPA grant

By Mary Elizabeth Williams-Villano

The money will aid in further cleanup of the Roswell Superfund site.



It wasn't extraterrestrials that created the mess, just old dry cleaning businesses. The toxic chemicals they left behind long after closing up shop caused a big swath of Roswell, New Mexico to be declared a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Superfund site.

The 550-acre site includes spots where several dry cleaners had operated from 1956 to 1963, contaminating soil, soil vapor, indoor air and groundwater with tetrachloroethylene (PCE) and trichloroethylene. The PCE plume extends over two miles to the southeast of the 1100 block of Main Street.

A five-year review of the site by the EPA and NMED completed in September of 2017 found that the leading edge of the groundwater plume has expanded about 2,200 feet further to the southeast of the dry-cleaning area since 2008. The EPA recommended that a public information campaign be conducted to notify well owners and users of well water in the area. It also recommended that private wells in and around the groundwater plume area should be sampled for these contaminants.

"Cleaning up contaminated sites is central to EPA's mission of protecting human health and the environment," said Regional Administrator Anne Idsal. "This grant further empowers the state of New Mexico and the city of Roswell to lead this effort at the McGaffey and Main site."

"New Mexicans living in Roswell deserve to see this site cleaned up in a scientifically sound and timely manner," said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary James Kenney. "Securing federal funding is a critical piece of ensuring that happens."

The funding will allow NMED to lead the cleanup effort while involving other state and local partners, and to consult with the EPA before, during or after the cleanup in the interests of protecting human health and the environment. The money will also supplement remedial activities related to the cleanup and go toward paying for the work of characterizing the type and scope of the contamination.

Roswell, New Mexico is believed by some to be the spot where an alien spacecraft crash-landed in 1947, but the U.S. government has always denied this.

https://www.theadvocate.com/acadiana/news/article_295195be-53fc-11e9-b564-530f1b85d57d.html

State pledges \$80M for Bayou Chene floodgate that will relieve backwater flooding in 6 parishes

The Associated Press **MAR 31, 2019 - 4:30 PM**



Advocate staff photo by BRAD BOWIE -- A swollen Atchafalaya River flows through downtown Morgan City on Jan. 7, 2016.

MORGAN CITY, La. (AP) — Residents in six southeastern Louisiana parishes will get some relief from backwater flooding thanks to a new floodgate.

Gov. John Bel Edwards announced this week that the state's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority is pledging \$80 million to build a permanent floodgate across Bayou Chene.

The money comes from a revenue-sharing agreement called the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act that gives gulf states money from oil and gas developments off their shores.

The floodgate will help Morgan City and other communities in the area that are prone to backwater flooding that happens when the Atchafalaya River is running high and water backs up north up Bayou Chene.

"Backwater flooding in St. Mary and neighboring parishes has increasingly been a problem over the past decade as the Mississippi River and in turn, the Atchafalaya, has reached flood stage," the governor said in a news release. "Thanks to heroic, emergency efforts by the St. Mary Levee District, the worst was averted in both 2011 and 2016. Today, we are investing in this flood protection project to provide a permanent, long-lasting solution for the people of St. Mary's Parish and the surrounding region."

Over the years the area has relied on stopgap measures to hold back the water such as sinking a barge in the Bayou. St. Mary, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Martin, Assumption and Iberville parishes have all been affected.

"In 2016, it took 15 days to design, bid, build and install the temporary barge. It did the job but it wasn't cheap and it had to be removed after the flood threat passed because it was

blocking navigation. Having a permanent structure we can open and close is a better, smarter solution," said St. Mary Parish President David Hanagriff in the news release.

The structure will have a 400-foot barge gate that can be swung into place and then sunk during high waters.



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COMMENTARY 7 HRS AGO

Every level of government failed southern Dallas by allowing Shingle Mountain to grow



Marsha Jackson, Contributor

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When I learned the city of Dallas had pulled the certificate of occupancy for Blue Star Recycling's asphalt shingle operation along South Central Expressway, otherwise known as Shingle Mountain, I cried. I cried out of relief that something serious was finally being done about a company that's made life miserable for families on our small southern Dallas street for over a year.

But I also cried out of anger. This official relief was months in coming and came only because I

allies who were with me at City Hall holding a news conference challenging the city's inaction when we got the news. If it had not been for these advocates, including Dallas County Commissioner John Wiley Price, I'm convinced the city wouldn't even know about Shingle Mountain, much less be taking the operator to court.

Blue Star's operation didn't have to become a public health and environmental disaster. It never should have been allowed to open. Every level of government failed my community. The state gave a permit it shouldn't have. The city gave permission it shouldn't have. Only recently have both recognized the amount of harm they mistakenly approved.

[Shingle Mountain fight came to City Hall, just as Dallas moved to shut down asphalt recycler](#)

Despite Blue Star promising the state in March 2018 it wouldn't store more than 260 tons of waste at any one time, by December 2018 the site was already storing approximately 60,000 tons of used asphalt shingles.

Blue Star promised the state it would have an approved fire protection plan by now. It doesn't.

Blue Star should have filed for a state air permit to operate the grinders that shred asphalt shingles into dust. Neither the city nor the state required it when Blue Star opened.

Blue Star promised the state it had adequate funds to close and clean up its site. It doesn't.

As of March 21, the city of Dallas believes Blue Star needs a special use permit from the city to operate. But it never required one when Blue Star opened for business.

Dallas now says Blue Star needs a permit for storage in the floodplain. It's the same floodplain that was there in late 2017 when Blue Star began to set up shop with the city's OK.

Something is wrong when a company can so openly challenge city and state laws without any agency noticing. Something is wrong with the system when a local non-profit group is the only one doing any air monitoring at my house.

Dallas city attorneys were right to say Blue Star's operators don't feel the laws apply to them.

I can't help but think Blue Star leaders chose their location because they thought they could get away with abuses in southern Dallas. I can't help but think the inadequate responses to the Shingle Mountain crisis by the state and city also occurred because of the part of Dallas I live in.

We must close and clean up Shingle Mountain. But to prevent future Shingle Mountains, Dallas must get rid of decades' worth of racist zoning along and south of the Trinity River. It must be proactive and pro-citizen. My new friends and I have given the City Council language for four ordinances that are steps in the right direction. They establish equity in locating polluting industries, begin to separate people from polluters and give citizens more access to City Hall.

Dallas will learn the lessons of Shingle Mountain, either on its own, or from public pressure. Southern Dallas residents will not be the city's dumping ground any longer.

Marsha Jackson lives near Blue Star Recycling's asphalt shingle operation and has been actively protesting the company. She wrote this column for The Dallas Morning News.



What's your view?

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A publication of The Texas Tribune

GOVERNMENT

Educating and preparing communities for long-term disaster recovery

By George P. Bush, April 2, 2019



Photo by REUTERS/Adrees Latif

Disaster preparedness and recovery would probably not come to mind if you were asked what the Texas General Land Office (GLO), Texas Education Agency, Texas Department of Insurance and the Texas Department of State Health Services have in common. But these four agencies each play critical roles in educating and preparing communities for disasters — including hurricanes, tornadoes and wildfires. However, while each agency works hard to communicate its objectives across Texas, we should combine forces to amplify our messaging efforts.

No other storm has ever affected Texas like Hurricane Harvey. The unprecedented impact helped us realize the importance of sharing best practices and ideas to serve our communities. In the GLO's conversations with county judges, mayors, police and fire chiefs and other local officials, they often mentioned a serious gap between what their communities believe about federal disaster recovery assistance and the reality of what is allowed under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

A publication of The Texas Tribune

making claims in order to receive federal assistance. Moreover, many disasters do not actually meet the threshold to receive any federal recovery funds.

Additionally, many residents are seriously underinsured or mistakenly believe their home insurance policies also cover wind or flood damage. According to [the Washington Post](#), “only 17 percent of homeowners in the eight counties most directly affected by Harvey have flood insurance policies, according to a Washington Post analysis of Federal Emergency Management Agency data.” The lapse created a significant disparity between the damage caused by the storm and the financial resources available for housing recovery.

As the next hurricane season quickly approaches, the GLO has ramped up ongoing efforts to encourage Texans to invest in adequate flood and wind coverage in addition to basic home insurance policies. We are also working to ensure community leaders are informed of disaster prevention and recovery resources in advance of the next storms. We’ve even teamed with Austin Pets Alive to help pet owners be prepared in case of disaster.

While we continue to echo these messages to reporters and in social media, we must continue to consider what we can do better. In the Texas Legislature, Sen. Borris Miles, D-Houston, and Rep. Ed Thompson, R-Pearland, have filed companion bills calling on the governor to issue a proclamation each year instructing local leaders and state agencies to conduct community outreach and education efforts in preparation for hurricane season.

This is common-sense legislation and I commend these leaders for their efforts in the Texas Legislature to improve our state’s disaster readiness.

I would also like to encourage all agencies involved in weather-related disaster preparedness and recovery to coordinate with one another to amplify each other’s messages and ensure our public information campaigns are as comprehensive as possible. Promoting hurricane preparedness and managing expectations about federal assistance will help ensure everyone at the local, state and federal levels is unified and able to relay accurate information to their constituents.

Working together, the GLO and other state agencies can inform our fellow Texans about preparing for hurricane season, and about what types of assistance may be available following a natural disaster. We are proud to be working every day to help our fellow Texans rebuild stronger and more resilient communities. And while the GLO will continue its public awareness efforts, we will also look for opportunities to exchange ideas and work together with community leaders and other state agencies to help Texans prepare and protect their futures.

Disclosure: The Texas General Land Office has been a financial supporter of The Texas Tribune, a nonprofit, nonpartisan news organization that is funded in part by donations from members, foundations and corporate sponsors. Financial supporters play no role in the Tribune’s journalism. Find a complete list of them [here](#).



Disputed oil, gas lease sale brings in \$15M

Published: Tuesday, April 2, 2019

An oil and gas lease sale that drew criticism from tribal leaders and environmentalists has netted more than \$15 million in revenue.

The Bureau of Land Management says nearly half the money from Thursday's sale of parcels in New Mexico and Oklahoma will go to the two states and the rest to the U.S. Treasury.

The parcels up for bid covered more than 13,800 acres. The highest bid was for land in southeast New Mexico, where a boom has resulted in record production during the past year.

In northwestern New Mexico, tribal leaders had asked that the sale be put off until federal managers update a resource management plan for the San Juan Basin. They say the agency needs to consider the cultural significance of sites in the area before allowing more leasing. — *Associated Press*

EPA

Wheeler speaks regularly with Trump's top energy adviser

Sean Reilly, E&E News reporter

Published: Monday, April 1, 2019



President Trump's energy adviser Francis Brooke is seen here at U.N. climate talks in Bonn, Germany, in 2017. Dominika Zarzycka/ZUMA Press/Newscom

EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler is regularly in contact with the White House's senior energy adviser, according to newly released scheduling calendars.

The calendars, released last week in response to Freedom of Information Act requests from E&E News, indicate that Wheeler and Francis Brooke spoke repeatedly on what are described as "weekly check-in" calls. The calendars run from the beginning of September through December 2018.

While the calendars also reflect similar contact between Wheeler and senior EPA staffers, Brooke appears to be the only White House official to fall in that category.

EPA and White House press staffers did not immediately reply to emailed requests for comment this morning on the purpose of the regular conversations, given that Brooke's portfolio involves energy policy, not environmental issues.

But at a minimum, they could be read as a sign of White House involvement in EPA decisionmaking of interest to the fossil fuel industry. Last month, for example, Brooke reportedly facilitated a meeting with automakers aimed at enlisting their support of a proposed rollback of Obama clean car rules, a source familiar with the matter told E&E News ([E&E News PM](#), March 22).

Wheeler, who started at EPA as deputy administrator, became acting chief in early July after his predecessor, Scott Pruitt, abruptly resigned. Wheeler won Senate confirmation in February to hold the job long-term. Brooke, who previously worked in Vice President Mike Pence's policy shop, took the energy post last April ([Climatewire](#), April 19, 2018).

Wheeler's calendars, which had been previously released for months prior to last September, also show the two men were in regular touch.

Reporter Kevin Bogardus contributed.

PowerPost Analysis

The Energy 202: EPA's own adviser finds Trump's rollback of car rules could cost jobs

By [Dino Grandoni](#)

THE LIGHTBULB

An environmental adviser to the Trump administration projects that its attempt to reverse Obama-era fuel-efficiency standards could have a steep long-term toll on the U.S. economy and eventually cost the country hundreds of thousands of jobs.

The research by an outside adviser picked by former Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt -- and funded by grants from the auto industry -- is sure to fuel critics of the Trump administration's attempts to stall rules meant to reduce the amount of climate-warming and illness-causing pollution produced by the nation's automobiles.

While cutting the car regulations would give the U.S. economy a short-term jolt, it would in the long run forestall job-creating automotive innovation while putting less money in the wallets of motorists who would have to spend more on gasoline, according to the adviser John D. Graham, who is dean of Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and his four colleagues.

The Trump administration's proposal to freeze standards on tailpipe emissions for new cars and light trucks at 2020 levels, or otherwise watering down their stringency, would create 236,000 fewer jobs by 2035 than if the Obama-era standards stayed intact, according to [the paper](#) published late last month in the peer-reviewed Journal of Policy Analysis and Management.

"The final result of our paper is that the possible Trump administration changes to the standard will reduce the short-term loss but it will also significantly reduce the long-term benefit," said co-author Sanya Carley, associate professor at Indiana University.

Still, Graham, a former head of regulatory affairs in President George W. Bush's Office of Management and Budget, stopped short of offering an overall opinion on the Trump administration's proposal.

"We have not analyzed the full range of impacts that are relevant to offering an informed opinion," he said.

The Obama-era rules, which compel automakers to build cars that get increasingly more miles per gallon of gasoline, constituted a cornerstone of that administration's efforts to reduce the nation's overall greenhouse-gas emissions.

But the Trump administration, in trying to roll back those rules, argues that forcing carmakers to manufacture more expensive fuel-efficient vehicles jeopardizes the safety of drivers.

They contend that some consumers will forgo buying the pricier vehicles and keep driving older cars that perform less well in accidents.

The result, according to a statement from President Trump's EPA, would be the prevention of "thousands of on-road fatalities and injuries as compared to the standards set forth in the 2012 final rule."

But top Trump administration officials at the EPA, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and White House are still wrangling over how exactly to undo the Obama-era rules.

After initially suggesting freezing the standards at 2020 levels, administration officials are now [exploring the idea](#) of gradually ratcheting up fuel efficiency standards between 0.5 percent and 1 percent a year to address the automakers' call for annual increases.

For months, the Trump administration has been at loggerheads with California and other blue states over their efforts to freeze standards on the tailpipe emissions. After months of negotiation, the administration [broke off talks](#) with California in February.

The end of those talks paves the way for California to set its own standards, which under a half-century-old law it has the authority to do.

But having two sets of tailpipe rules nationwide for new cars is a worst-case scenario for the automotive industry, which fears a higher cost of complying with that patchwork of regulations. Early in Trump's administration, automakers called for revisiting the rule, but have now expressed concern about how a rollback could fracture the U.S. auto market.

Starting in 2015, the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, a group of leading automakers, paid the Indiana University researchers nearly \$800,000 to prepare a study of fuel-economy standards put forward under Obama.

Graham's team [published](#) a study in March 2017. That spring, they briefed government analysts in Washington and Ann Arbor, Mich., on its findings, Graham said.

But after the Trump administration came up with its own proposal to weaken fuel-efficiency standards, the team followed up with its most recent analysis of the potential economic effects of that proposal. The team's research does not quantify any health benefits stemming from reducing auto pollution.

Auto Alliance spokeswoman Gloria Bergquist said “the release of the study last week was a surprise.”

The researchers also emphasized that the Auto Alliance did not have any influence on the outcome of the studies. “We were so careful to make sure that this funder didn't have any input on what our decisions were,” Carley said.

The involvement of Graham in the study is significant because the former Bush administration official was [tapped](#) in 2017 by Pruitt to join a key research advisory panel.

While in office, Pruitt named a cadre of industry-connected scientists to the Scientific Advisory Board and other panels, which help guide the EPA’s research objectives and make recommendations that form the basis for new regulations.

Critics of the Trump administration note that freezing the pollution standards would be a boon for oil and gas producers allied with the president.

Indeed, Graham's study found that while the U.S. economy as a whole stands to benefit from the fuel-efficiency standards, a handful of southern oil-producing states — including Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas — would likely lose economically because of it.

"The effects are not even across regions," Carley said. "Some regions take a bigger hit."

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POWER PLAYS

— **Massive disaster relief bill stalls in Senate:** The measure meant to provide funding for victims of hurricanes, wildfires, flooding and other major natural disasters was defeated in the Senate amid tensions between Democrats and Trump over aid to Puerto Rico, which is still recovering from Hurricane Maria. Senate Democrats voted down the \$13.45 billion legislation, even after Trump tweeted calling on them to support the aid bill earlier on Monday. The chamber’s Democrats said the \$600 million allotted for Puerto Rico’s food stamp program was not enough, The Post’s Erica Werner and Jeff Stein [report](#), and have embraced a House-passed relief bill which includes hundreds of millions of dollars more for the U.S. territory, although that version also failed on Monday.

Trump’s Twitter outburst "suggests there won’t be an easy resolution to the political dispute holding up federal money for those deluged in Midwestern floods and hit by other recent natural calamities,” The Post’s Tim

Elfrink [writes](#). “While disaster relief is traditionally bipartisan, Trump’s reluctance to pay more toward Puerto Rico’s recovery has opened a gulf between the parties.”

And again with that \$91 billion figure: His tweets also referred again to a figure of \$91 billion for disaster relief, which “actually reflects a high-end, long-term estimate for recovery costs; a fraction of that has so far been budgeted, and even less has been spent.” It is not the amount of money Puerto Rico has been given.

Per The Post's Fact Checker columnist, Glenn Kessler:

— **“Go look at the countries that are still in”:** Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told reporters after speaking at the U.S. Army War College in Pennsylvania that the Paris climate accord didn’t make a difference for the countries that were involved. “Go look at the countries that are still in the Paris agreement and see what their CO2 emissions were. It’s one thing to sign a document. It’s another thing to actually change your behavior,” he said, [according](#) to Penn Live.

Though nearly every single other nation is still a part of the Paris accord, he called out China specifically for its [still increasing](#) carbon emissions. “Go look at Chinese carbon emissions since they entered the Paris agreement... If you’re looking for a change, it didn’t change a thing.”

— **Texas billionaire clashes with California's clean energy goals:** A Texas billionaire and major Trump supporter is aiming to overturn California’s clean-energy goals with a case before federal regulators. He’s arguing that the state’s policies “discriminate against generators powered by fossil fuels like natural gas and coal as the state promotes sources like solar and wind power,” the New York Times [reports](#). And a decision in Andrew Beal’s favor “could further the administration’s energy agenda, giving new life to coal, natural gas and nuclear power throughout the United States. It could also upend California’s recently enacted mandate for 100 percent carbon-free electricity as well as efforts nationwide to curb carbon emissions.”

— **National Park Service's San Francisco office stays put:** House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) blocked a plan for the National Park Service to relocate its Pacific West regional headquarters to Vancouver, Wash., saving about 150 federal jobs in her hometown of San Francisco, E&E News [reports](#). A spokesman for the Park Service said the agency renewed its lease, a move Pelosi praised as a victory for San Francisco. The initial idea for moving was an attempt to save \$2 million in rent a year and help with recruiting new staff to a city with a lower cost of living.

THERMOMETER

— **A new climate generation:** In Atlanta last month, Al Gore roared about climate action during his climate leadership training, “a three-day barrage of hope and fright and boredom and motivation,” The Post’s Dan Zak [writes](#). And at one table sat 24-year-old Nina Simone Barrett from Raleigh, N.C., one of 600 students at the training. While working for her master’s degree in public administration at North Carolina Central University, a historically black institution, she did research on food deserts and saw a link between environment, health and

poverty. A professor encouraged her to apply for Gore's climate training, so she did and took her first solo trip to attend the program last month. Zak weaves together the stories of Gore and Barrett, individuals from different generations looking to tackle climate change. At her table during one event, Barrett took notes and whispered to herself as Gore explained that "half the black population of the United States lives within 30 miles of a coal plant, that the death rate of black children from asthma was 10 times higher than that of white children." "Nina, this is exactly why you are here, she thought. Your story is part of this statistic. This is why you need to be involved," Zak writes.

— **Another whale washes up with plastic in its stomach:** A pregnant sperm whale washed ashore in Sardinia, Italy, last week — and it had ingested 49 pounds of plastic, [CNN reports](#). The country's environment minister and a marine life nonprofit organization also said the whale was carrying a dead fetus. "She was pregnant and had almost certainly aborted before (she) beached," said Luca Bittau, president of the SeaMe group. "The fetus was in an advanced state of composition." Sergio Costa, Italy's environment minister, vowed the nation would be one of the first countries to implement a law prohibiting a range of single-use plastic products that was approved by the European Parliament.

OIL CHECK

— **Shell quits trade group over climate-change positions:** "Citing differences over climate change, Royal Dutch Shell has pulled out of an industry trade group called the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers," The Post's Steven Mufson [reports](#). "Shell said that it was at odds with the refining and petrochemical group on the Paris climate agreement, carbon pricing, fuel mandates and the reduction of methane emissions."

But: After reviewing its trade organization memberships, the oil giant decided to stay in the American Petroleum Institute, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and seven other trade associations despite "some misalignment" between its views on climate policy and theirs.

— **Duke Energy ordered to excavate coal ash:** North Carolina's environmental agency has ordered Duke Energy Corp., the largest electric company in the nation, to remove all the coal ash from its power plant sites to reduce the risk of having toxic chemicals leak into water supplies. The decision will affect six coal-fired plants operating in the state, while eight others had been ordered to excavate remaining coal residue, the Associated Press [reports](#). "The science points us clearly to excavation as the only way to protect public health and the environment," state Department of Environmental Quality Secretary Michael Regan said in a statement. Following the decision, North Carolina joins Virginia and South Carolina in ordering electric utilities to remove coal ash from unlined storage.

DAYBOOK

Today

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee holds a [hearing](#) on the 2020 budget request for the Energy Department.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee holds a [hearing](#) on oversight of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife holds a [hearing](#) on the state of Western water infrastructure and innovation.

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources holds a legislative [hearing](#).

The House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change holds a [hearing](#) on state and local action to combat climate change.

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies holds a [hearing](#) on the EPA budget.

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies holds a [hearing](#) on the budget request for the Department of Energy and National Nuclear Security Administration.

Coming Up

The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee holds an executive [session](#) on various legislative measures on Wednesday.

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies holds a [hearing](#) on the budget for the National Parks Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey on Wednesday.

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies holds a [hearing](#) on science, energy and environmental management programs on Wednesday.

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development holds a [hearing](#) on the 2020 budget request for the National Nuclear Security Administration on Wednesday.

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Interior, Environment and Related Agencies holds a [hearing](#) on the 2020 EPA budget request on Wednesday.


The House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis holds a [hearing](#) on "Generation Climate: Young Leaders Urge Climate Action Now" on Thursday.

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies holds a [hearing](#) on the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement budgets on Thursday.

EXTRA MILEAGE

— **How does climate change affect the cherry blossoms bloom?** The Post's Capital Weather Gang breaks it down:

Dino Grandoni

Dino Grandoni is an energy and environmental policy reporter and the author of PowerPost's daily tipsheet on the beat, The Energy 202. Before The Post, he was the climate and energy reporter at BuzzFeed News, where he covered the intersection of science, industry and government. [Follow](#) 

Shell to leave oil lobby group over climate policy concerns

Kelly Gilblom, **Bloomberg** Published 6:48 am CDT, Tuesday, April 2, 2019



Royal Dutch Shell chief executive Ben van Beurden.

Royal Dutch Shell Plc's position on climate change is misaligned with about half of the trade associations it's a part of, and the disagreement with one is so severe the company will let its membership lapse next year.

The findings were issued in a first-of-its-kind survey of 100 trade associations with lobbying groups is unlikely to reverberate across the industry. The survey found that the same groups and already facing pressure to change their business models with the Paris



Recommended Video

Shell will leave the American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers association next year because of its

climate-change policy stance. It also named nine other groups that it disagrees with, including the powerful American Petroleum Institute and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, but said it will “engage further” with them.

RELATED: Shell executive balances two energy worlds

“The publication of this report is a first step to greater transparency around our activities in this area,” Shell said in the report. “Shell’s investors, and more broadly civil society, must be confident that we engage constructively with others on climate change.”

Trade associations have long been a target of environmental activists who support tougher regulation on the industry. Following investor pressure, Shell said last year it would prove through greater reporting that it isn’t funneling money into institutions that hinder progress on cutting greenhouse-gas emissions.

Of the nine groups it’s misaligned with but will stay a member, Shell only disagrees with some of their positions. For example, it said the API fought to repeal rules around methane emissions in 2017, while the company wanted those to stay.

Shell said it found a “material misalignment” with the American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, something it cannot rectify. Unlike Shell, the group neither supports carbon pricing or hasn’t publicly supported the goal of the Paris accord, the Anglo-Dutch oil major said.

RELATED: Dire climate conclusions of environmental activists

AFPM works on “myriad issues” for its members. “We’re not fully aligned on every policy, but we agree on many policies that are in the best interest of our members and consumers that rely on us,” Chet Thomas said in an emailed statement.





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California jury orders Chevron to pay \$21M for cancer claims

by The Associated Press | April 1, 2019 at 2:11 p.m.

1 COMMENT

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FILE- This Aug. 20, 2012, file photo, shows a Chevron sign in Miami. A Northern California jury ordered Chevron Corp. to pay the families of two brothers a combined \$21.4 million after they claimed the men's exposure to a toxic chemical while working at a company plant caused the cancer that killed them. The San Francisco Chronicle reported that The Contra Costa County jury's verdict Friday, March 29, 2019. Brothers Gary Eaves and Randy Eaves worked at a Chevron-owned tire manufacturer in Arkansas. (AP Photo/Alan Diaz, File)

SAN FRANCISCO — A Northern California jury ordered Chevron Corp. to pay the families of two brothers who died of cancer a combined \$21.4 million after concluding the company failed to properly warn the men about the dangers of a toxic solvent they worked with at a company-owned tire factory.

The San Francisco Chronicle reported that the Contra Costa County jury's verdict Friday came after three days of deliberations and four weeks of trial.



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The jury concluded that the solvent benzene caused the cancers that killed brothers Gary Eaves and Randy Eaves. The brothers worked at a tire manufacturer in Arkansas owned by Unocal for decades. San Ramon, California-based Chevron purchased Unocal in 2005. Both brothers at times worked as a "spray booth operator" responsible for spraying the solvent on tires. Gary also hauled tires coated in benzene.

Gary died of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 2015 at age 61. Randy died of leukemia in 2018, also at age 61.

The families' lawyer Mary Alexander argued that none of the plant workers wore respirators or protective clothing while working with the solvent. Alexander also argued that workers were never advised to handle benzene inside of a ventilation booth.

The families of the men filed their wrongful death lawsuit in the San Francisco suburb of Contra Costa County where Chevron is based.

Chevron said it is mulling its next legal step.

"We do not believe that Unocal had any role in the claimed injuries and we are evaluating the jury's decision and the court's rulings in this matter," the company said in a statement.

Topics

[Chevron](#), [California](#), [Contra Costa county](#), [Gary Eaves](#), [Randy Eaves](#), [Northern California](#), [Mary Alexander](#), [San Ramon](#), [San Francisco](#), [San Francisco Chronicle](#), [Arkansas](#)

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Tie Breaker



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